

## FROM PASTOR JEREMY: RESURRECTION IS STILL HAPPENING

Easter is here—and with it comes a story we've heard before. A stone rolled away. An empty tomb. Fear turning into something like hope. But here's the question I keep coming back to: What if resurrection isn't just something that happened... but something that is still happening?

On Easter, we don't just remember a moment in history. We step into a reality that continues to unfold. Resurrection shows up wherever life pushes back against death, wherever hope refuses to give up, wherever love refuses to let the last word belong to fear.

It shows up in quiet ways—in healing we didn't expect, in relationships slowly being restored, in the courage to begin again. And sometimes it shows up in bold, disruptive ways—turning over what we thought was settled and calling us into something new.

The good news of Easter isn't just that Jesus was raised. It's that resurrection is the shape of the world God is still creating.

So wherever you find yourself this season—whether you come with deep faith, lingering questions, or something in between—there is room for you in this story.

Because resurrection isn't finished yet, and neither are we.

## NEW BIBLE STUDY: JONAH FOR NORMAL PEOPLE

Beginning Wednesday, April 22 at 11:00AM, Pastor Jeremy is launching a new Bible study exploring *Jonah for Normal People* by Jared Byas.

Jonah is one of the most familiar—and most misunderstood—stories in the Bible. This study invites us to look beyond the fish and wrestle with the deeper questions at the heart of the text: justice and mercy, who belongs, and what it means when God doesn't act the way we expect.

Together, we'll explore the historical context, themes, and theology of Jonah, discovering how this ancient story still speaks into our lives today.

Books are available for \$15. To sign up, email [register@ummecosta.org](mailto:register@ummecosta.org).

## CHARGE CONFERENCE APPROVAL AND NEXT STEPS

At the Charge Conference held this week, the motion to transfer the Third Avenue building and associated properties to Love INC of Mecosta County was officially approved. This marks a significant step forward in a process that has been shaped by thoughtful discernment, careful conversation, and a shared desire to use our resources in ways that most effectively serve our community. With Charge Conference approval now complete, we are moving from discernment into implementation. This means:

- Finalizing the purchase agreement and legal documents
- Working with district and conference leadership to complete required approvals
- Coordinating details related to the transition of the property

Once the transfer is finalized, Love INC will assume ownership of the property and responsibility for its use. Our hope—and expectation—is that the building will become an active hub for community-centered ministry under their leadership.

We know that decisions like this can bring a mix of reactions. There is history in that building, and it has mattered to many people. At the same time, we believe this is a step forward—one that allows us to be more focused in our ministry while also ensuring that the Third Avenue property continues to serve the community in meaningful and impactful ways. We are grateful for the work that has gone into this process and for the partnerships that are making this next chapter possible.

## What's Happening

### SUNDAY, APRIL 5

7AM - Sunrise Service w/ The United Church @ Hemlock Park  
9:30AM - Worship @ Paris (North) Campus  
9:30AM - Fellowship / Coffee Hour @ First Church (Downtown) Campus  
10:00AM - Worship @ First Church (Downtown) Campus

### WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8

10AM - SOUL Circle @ Downtown Campus  
6PM - Praise Team Rehearsal @ Downtown Campus

### THURSDAY, APRIL 9

5:30PM - Community Dinner @ Downtown Campus

## EUCHRE NIGHT AT THE DOWNTOWN CAMPUS

Join us for an evening of cards, connection, and a little friendly competition at our upcoming Euchre Night! We'll gather at the Downtown Campus on Wednesday, April 15th, with doors opening at 5:30PM and gameplay beginning at 6:00PM. Whether you're a seasoned Euchre player or just looking for a relaxed night out, this is a great opportunity to spend time together, meet new people, and enjoy the community we're building. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Barbara Erb in the church office or reach out to Cheryl or Rex Richardson. We hope to see you there!

## WE'RE HIRING!

**Choir Director** - Provide musical leadership, rehearse and direct our choir, and help shape meaningful worship experiences through choral music. If you have questions or would like to apply, please contact the main office and speak with Barb or Pastor Jeremy.

## STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

Barbara Erb - Director of Administrative Services  
[barbara@ummecosta.org](mailto:barbara@ummecosta.org) - (231) 796-7771

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Rev. Jeremy Wicks - Executive Pastor  
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To schedule an appointment with Pastor Jeremy, contact Barbara Erb or schedule online @ [calendly.com/jeremy-ummecosta](https://calendly.com/jeremy-ummecosta)

Week of April 5 - April 11, 2026

# Family News



# Love Rises!

## UNITED METHODIST MINISTRIES OF MECOSTA COUNTY

304 ELM STREET, BIG RAPIDS MI 49307 • (231) 796-7771 • [WWW.UMMECOSTA.ORG](http://WWW.UMMECOSTA.ORG)

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE HOURS: TUES - FRIDAY, 9AM - 3PM  
PASTOR OFFICE HOURS: TUESDAY & THURSDAY, 9AM - 12PM & 12:30PM - 3PM

### NORTH CAMPUS - PARIS

109 Lincoln St  
Paris, MI 49338  
[ummecosta.org/paris](http://ummecosta.org/paris)

Worship Gathering  
in-person  
Sundays @ 9:30AM

### DOWNTOWN CAMPUS - FIRST

304 Elm Street  
Big Rapids, MI 49307  
[bigrapidsfirst.org](http://bigrapidsfirst.org)

Worship Gathering  
in-person and online  
Sundays @ 10AM

# Order of Worship - April 5, 2026

EASTER SUNDAY

## Prelude

## Welcome & Announcements

\* **Hymn** - "Christ the Lord is Risen Today", UMH #302

\* **Call to Worship** (Reader / *People*)

The stone has been rolled away.

*Love will not stay buried.*

The tomb is empty.

*Love has risen.*

Death does not have the final word.

*Love speaks louder.*

Grief does not define the story.

*Love rewrites it.*

This is the day when everything changes.

*Love rises—and we rise with it.*

Christ is risen!

*Alleluia, Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!*

Let us worship the God whose love will not stay buried.

## Children's Message

**Old Testament Reading** - Isaiah 65:17-25 (NRSVUE)

\* **Hymn** - "Up from the Grave He Arose", UMH #322

**Gospel Reading** - John 20:1-18 (NRSVUE)

Reader: The word of God, for the people of God.

People: *Thanks be to God!*

**Message** - "Love Rises"

## Celebrating the Sacrament of Baptism

## Reception of New Members

## Celebrating the Sacrament of Holy Communion

\* **The Doxology**, UMH #95

\* **Benediction**

\* **Hymn** - "He Lives", UMH #310

## Postlude

\* PLEASE RISE IN BODY OR SPIRIT

*Pastor Jeremy will be in the Warren Street Lobby after the service and would love to greet you.*

# Welcome to First Church!

Welcome to First Church, the downtown campus of United Methodist Ministries of Mecosta County - we're so glad you're here! This is a community where every person belongs, every story matters, and every question is welcome. If you're new or exploring, we'd love to get to know you. You can learn more about who we are and find helpful information for your first visit at [bigrapidsfirst.org](http://bigrapidsfirst.org).

Need directions? Curious about something? Our welcome team is nearby and ready to help. Truly, we're delighted to worship with you today.

## NOTES:



Check In Here

## SERVING TODAY - APRIL 5 (EASTER SUNDAY)

Reader: Rick Hult

Ushers: Pat & Marion Williamson, Joann Haist

Greeter: Nancy Spedowski

Nursery: Sarah DeLany, Julie Setlock

Fellowship Host: DeLany Family

Communion Servers: Cheryl Richardson, Karen Leiter

Organist: Shirley Jernstadt

Accompanist: Kathy Bell

Tech Team: Brian Bejcek, Gary Poole

## SERVING NEXT WEEK - APRIL 12

Reader: Marlene Rodgers

Ushers: Colin & Roberta Cline

Greeter: Pete Jensen

Nursery: Sarah DeLany, Char Fitch

Sunday School: Larisa Draves, Brenda Chaffee

Fellowship Host: Denise Cosper

## THINK ABOUT IT THIS WEEK - LOVE RISES

Easter is not just something we celebrate—it's something we step into. The story doesn't end at the empty tomb. It begins there. What looked finished wasn't. What felt final wasn't. What seemed buried was not gone—it was waiting. Love rises.

And when love rises, it doesn't stay contained in a moment, a building, or a single day. It moves outward. It disrupts what we thought was settled. It calls us by name, just as it did in the garden. It meets us in places we had already given up on and says, "There is still more here."

Love rises in quiet ways and in undeniable ones—in healing, in courage, in forgiveness, in the decision to begin again. It rises wherever life pushes back against despair, wherever hope refuses to disappear, wherever grace shows up when we least expect it.

This week, the question isn't whether love has risen. The question is: where is it rising now—and will we recognize it when it does?

## Questions to Reflect On:

- Where have you assumed the story was over—only to realize something new might still be possible?
- Where do you see signs of life, hope, or renewal breaking through in your life right now?
- What part of your life feels closed off, buried, or stuck—and what might it look like for love to meet you there?
- Who in your life needs to experience the kind of love that refuses to give up or stay buried?

## Ways to Live It Out This Week:

- Pay attention: Notice moments where something small feels like new life—don't dismiss it.
- Choose love: In one situation where it would be easier to withdraw, lean in instead.
- Speak life: Offer encouragement, forgiveness, or presence to someone who needs it.
- Show up: Do one tangible act that reflects love rising—especially where it's least expected.

## A Prayer for the Week:

God of resurrection, when we cannot see beyond what feels finished, help us trust that love is still at work. Where we feel stuck, bring movement. Where we feel weary, bring new life. Where we feel uncertain, call us by name. And as love rises, give us the courage to follow where it leads. Amen.

## Closing Thought:

Love has risen. And it is still rising—in you, through you, and all around you.

## APRIL MISSION FOCUS: NATIVE AMERICAN MINISTRIES SUNDAY

In April, we join The United Methodist Church in observing Native American Ministries Sunday. This special offering supports the development of Native American clergy and leaders, provides scholarships for Native students, and strengthens ministries serving Native communities.

This is one way we live out our mission—by investing in leadership, honoring diverse voices, and supporting ministry that is rooted in local culture and context.

We invite you to give generously, knowing your gift helps nurture leaders and strengthen communities across the connection. Gifts can be given in person or online. Please mark your checks or your envelopes with "NAMS" so that your gift is credited to the correct account.

**Your generosity makes a difference! To avoid any confusion in our giving systems, please make your checks out to First Church. Thank you for your continued support!**